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# HOLYOKE the Sun

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## STCC to offer auto damage appraiser course

SPRINGFIELD – Springfield Technical Community College will offer a certified auto damage appraiser course for insurance claims professionals and auto body technicians beginning March 1. The 60-hour course is the first step to becoming an auto damage appraiser in Massachusetts. The training through STCC's Workforce Development Center prepares students for the exam to be a licensed appraiser.

COURSE, 5

## HCC announces Black History Month events

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College is celebrating Black History Month this February with a series of online events that includes conversations about the 400-year span of African-American history, voting rights and health issues such as COVID-19 and their disproportionate impact on communities of color.

HISTORY, 5



## Outstanding HHS senior will receive new car

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Public Schools have announced one lucky senior from the class of 2020 or 2021 from North or Dean will win a brand new 2021 Hyundai Accent. According to the announcement, Class of 2021 seniors with a 3.0 GPA or higher and with six or fewer absences can enter themselves for the contest via a google form found in their school email! The car will be on display at both campuses - best of luck to all. The school district thanks Gary Rome, for its partnership, generosity, and support of Holyoke school students.

# Soldiers' Home seeks redemption

By Dalton Zbierski  
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – In the wake of an unprecedented tragedy, the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke is seeking redemption. After at least 76 elderly veterans residing in the facility succumbed to COVID-19 last spring, the state aspires to return the site to its former glory. The fifth legislative hearing pertaining to the Soldiers' Home outbreak occurred on Jan. 21. Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders listed several of the measures being taken to ensure that such an event never reoccurs. First, she identified several rampant problems that were observed under the home's former leadership, which contributed to the removal and arraignment of former Superintendent Bennett Walsh.

"There were not the internal processes, clinical management and operations, to withstand a pandemic," said Sudders. "There are many nursing homes in Massachusetts that faced the pandemic, including [the Soldiers Home in Chelsea], but their internal structures didn't collapse. What happened at Holyoke, from

See SOLDIERS, page 5



Legislature hearings continue regarding the tragic loss of 76 veterans during the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Photos by Dalton Zbierski



There is currently a movement to make many renovations to the home, but disputing views of how much work is needed and how many beds the facility should have.



Measures have been taken to ensure no further major outbreaks occur.

## Councilors concerned about rising school employee salaries

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – In 2019, new Holyoke High School Principal Dr. Stephen Mahoney had the highest salary in the Holyoke Public School system, according to a report submitted to the city council this week. Mahoney, who is Executive Principal of the high school, which includes the regular "North" campus and the Dean Tech "South" campus, made \$151,557.71 in 2019. There are 18 total positions that exceeded \$100,000 in the FY2019 budget. Not listed was the salary of former Receiver/Superintendent Dr. Stephen Zrike, who likely made the list 19 positions with his salary. Of the 18 exceeding the \$100,000 on the list of the "Top 100 Holyoke Public School salaries," seven of them are called "cabinet" positions. Those are positions in the central office working

under the receiver/superintendent. The top cabinet salary belongs to the school district's finance director, Anthony Soto. Eight of the 18, including Mahoney, are principals at the various schools in the district. The 100th highest salaried position is a special education teacher making \$73,043.59. Many on the top 100 are directors, vice principals, and special education teachers as well as other in specialized positions. The city council is now requesting a meeting with the school department to discuss the salary issue, expressing concerns with how high salaries throughout the district are getting. "I know we can't control what goes on in the schools," said Councilor Terry Murphy. "But these salaries go well beyond, 'you have done a good job.'" Murphy said many of the

See SALARIES, page 5

## City treasurer to resign

By Gregory A. Scibelli  
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – Citing an "inability to move the city forward," City Treasurer Sandra Smith said she was resigning her post near the end of the month. Smith was appointed city treasurer by Mayor Alex Morse in 2015 in an acting capacity. She was originally an assistant treasurer hired by Jon Lumbra in 2010. Lumbra, the elected city treasurer, resigned in 2015. The city council appointed Smith as the acting treasurer. She then ran for the position and was elected in the fall of 2015. She was unopposed in her last election, and her term was expiring at the end of 2021. Last week, she submitted a month's notice to Morse saying she would resign her position on Feb. 26. Her resignation letter, which was read into Tuesday night's Holyoke City Council meeting, stated she was not able to handle the stress of the position any longer, and did

not believe the city was moving in a positive direction. "As the city treasurer," said Smith. "I feel at this time the city is no longer going in a positive direction and, as treasurer, I can no longer make a difference for residents of Holyoke." Smith has a little less than three years remaining on her current term. The council accepted her resignation on Tuesday night and has posted the position on the city's website. Those interested in the position must apply to the city's personnel department for the position. The city council's public service committee will likely vet the candidates and recommend a candidate for the council's approval. The unexpired term would expire at the end of 2023 and anyone interested in running for the next term would have to run in that election. Smith leaves a department she believes was better than the way she found it.

See RESIGN, page 5

# White School to be part of accelerated repair program

HOLYOKE – The City of Holyoke and the Holyoke Public Schools (HPS) are excited to receive an invitation from the MSBA into their Accelerated Repair Program. In a recent letter to Mayor Alex B. Morse, MSBA Executive Director John K. McCarthy shared, “The MSBA’s Board of Directors voted to invite the City of Holyoke into the Accelerated Repair Program to collaborate with the MSBA in conducting a Schematic Design Study at the E.N. White Elementary School, Lt. Clayre P. Sullivan School, and Maurice A. Donahue Elementary School for potential roof replacement projects. I look forward to continuing working with

you as part of the MSBA’s Accelerated Repair Program.” The MSBA will provide up to 80% reimbursement for the cost of these efforts based on Holyoke’s per capita income. “Roof replacement at these three school buildings is essential, and we are beyond delighted that the MSBA has invited our city to participate in its Accelerated Repair Program and reimburse the City of Holyoke for eighty percent (80%) of the costs,” stated Mayor Alex B. Morse. “The roofs are over thirty years old, are at the end of their useful lives, and numerous repairs continue to be made. I want to thank the MSBA for their commitment and belief

in our great community.” “We are grateful to the MSBA, mayor’s office, and city council for their support, and we look forward to their collaboration in conducting the Schematic Design Study for these roof replacement projects,” stated Dr. Alberto Vázquez Matos. “This is a valuable opportunity for the city to obtain the maximum reimbursement for these much-needed restorations of our school buildings.” On Jan. 19, the city council approved \$270,000 for the schematic design process. This will allow the city to take the next steps with formal design and specification, and estimate the total anticipated costs of the projects for pre-

sentation to the MSBA. After an MSBA review, we anticipate permission to proceed with repairs subject to the City funding its twenty percent (20%) share of the costs. The projects are anticipated to begin during the summer of 2022 and conclude in the fall. “We are excited to support the process of obtaining this invitation to participate in the MSBA Accelerated Repair Program,” stated City Council President Todd McGee. “This gives the city the ‘biggest bang for the buck’ to restore our buildings at a fraction of the cost of the project’s value. I’m delighted to bring forth this opportunity with unanimous approval from the rest of the Council.”

# Velis requests Baker to improve new Soldiers’ Home plan

BOSTON – This week, Senator John Velis (D-Westfield) sent a letter to Governor Baker urging him to consider changing the proposed plans for a new Soldiers’ Home facility in Holyoke. The letter was signed by more than 80 State Senators and Representatives with significant support from both parties. It asks that the number of beds in the plan be increased and that a formal plan for a behavioral health unit be included. “I do not believe that the recommendations put forth by the architecture firm, Payette, will meet the future needs of our Veteran populations,” said Senator Velis, who represents Holyoke and the Soldiers’ Home. “From a diminished bed count, to a lack of preparation for the challenges our future Veterans will face, there are many ways that this plan should be improved. A new facility is badly needed, but it needs to have the capacity and resources necessary to be sustainable for years to come.” One of the letter’s main critiques is that the current proposal for a new facility only includes 192-beds, a decrease from the current capacity of 235. Although resident numbers at the Home are currently under that due to COVID-19’s impact, Senator Velis says that the proposed facility does not paint an accurate picture of what the future demand for beds at the Home will look like. “Any future military conflicts or pos-



State Sen. John Velis speaks at the Holyoke Soldiers’ Home in 2017. Submitted photo

sible wars would increase our Veteran population levels exponentially. It is also impossible to predict how many National Guard and Reserve members will achieve Veteran status in the years to come and therefore be eligible to live at the Home,” said Senator Velis, who noted how many members have been activated in recent months to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. “2020 was the busiest recorded year for the Guard since WWII, and just this week two National Guard Generals stated that the number of National Guardsmen needs to be great-

ly expanded to meet their demands.” (<https://www.stripes.com/news/us/business-year-ever-for-national-guard-shows-the-force-should-be-bigger-two-generals-say-1.660357>) The letter also notes that the Payette’s analysis did not take into account the full extent of the Home’s waitlist. While Payette determined that forty-one Veterans are currently on the waitlist, Senator Velis emphasized that this determination did not account for many veterans who had passed away or rescinded their application after the trag-

edies this past spring. The Senator also added that it is imperative to remember that the waitlist analysis was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently the application rates observed may be superficially low. “The Veterans Affairs Demographic Study that Payette relied upon doesn’t take several critical factors into account and it also only projects what the Veteran population will be until 2035,” said Senator Velis, who is a Veteran and Major in the Army Reserves as well. “Veterans are going to be relying on this Home for decades past that point and it is critical that their needs are taken into account. We’re going to have Veterans coming back with amputations, with traumatic-brain injuries, and with long-lasting burn pit effects. We need to be absolutely certain that the future Home can provide the care they need and deserve.” “I know the Administration and Legislature have the same common goal here, and I hope that our input is considered as we move towards the Construction Grant application deadline,” said Senator Velis. “When it comes down to it, we need to think about thirty years from now when a family calls the Home to get their loved one in. If the choice is between filling a vacancy or turning a Veteran away, the choice is abundantly clear.”



## AIR QUALITY CONTROL

Above, new filters are installed in the Holyoke Public Schools as part of funding from the state to improve air quality in the school buildings. Left, filters were also installed in the ceilings. Submitted photos

# HCC spring classes start Feb. 16

HOLYOKE – The spring 2021 semester officially began at Holyoke Community College on Monday, Jan. 25, but prospective students still have two more opportunities to start classes in February and March. Spring session II classes at HCC begin Tuesday, Feb. 16. Spring start III classes begin Monday, March 29. “HCC introduced two “Flexible Fall” start dates last semester to accommodate students as they adjusted to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and they were very popular,” said Mark Hudgik, HCC’s director of Admissions. “We decided to continue this spring with two flexible start dates for students who may not have been ready on Jan. 25.” Feb. 16-start classes run for 12 weeks. March 29-start classes run for seven. All spring semester courses conclude by Wednesday, May 12. Students who enroll for spring session II or III have the opportunity to take a variety of different classes in a

wide array of academic areas and can earn as many as four credits per course for a lab science, such as biology or forensic science. These accelerated spring courses are being offered in anatomy and physiology, anthropology, biology, communication, culinary arts, Earth science, education, engineering, English, English as a Second Language, forensic science, history, human services, marketing, math, medical assisting, nutrition, philosophy, political science, psychology, social science, and sociology. With the exception of culinary arts and medical assisting classes, which include in-person, on-campus components, all spring session II and III classes are either fully online or “blended remote,” which means they include both asynchronous lessons and real-time virtual instruction. A full list of classes for spring session II and III can be viewed at [hcc.edu/spring](http://hcc.edu/spring).

Community Newspaper

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# Holyoke Medical Center seeks blood and plasma donors

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Medical Center is actively seeking blood and convalescent plasma donors. The center’s Blood Bank depends on area residents, their friends and neighbors to help meet the transfusion needs of the local community.

“The demand for convalescent plasma is higher than the supply that has been donated throughout the region. People who have recovered from COVID-19 are encouraged to make a donation and help save the lives of up to two people in our community,” said Jon Gronbach, director of laboratory services at Holyoke

Medical Center.

Convalescent plasma is a liquid component of blood from patients who have recovered from COVID-19. Patients who have recovered from the disease have antibodies to protect themselves to fight the virus. By making a blood and convalescent plasma donation, recovered patients can help others fight COVID-19 as well.

Blood and convalescent plasma supplies continue to be low and shortages persist in all categories. Emergency supplies from the Red Cross are often limited. More than 75 percent of the blood and convalescent plasma needed

by patients at the medical center comes from people living in Holyoke, Chicopee, South Hadley and the surrounding communities.

All eligible donors will receive a free recognition gift for their donation, and eligible convalescent plasma donors will receive a free COVID IgG test.

The Blood Bank, located on the first floor of Holyoke Medical Center, is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Appointments are required.

For further information or to schedule an appointment, call the HMC Blood Bank at 413-534-2591.

# St. Patrick’s Road Race going virtual

HOLYOKE – If you haven’t heard by now, for the second year in a row, the Holyoke St. Patrick’s Day Road Race has been cancelled due to concerns surrounding COVID-19.

We certainly didn’t come to this decision lightly but in the interest of our participants, volunteers, and our community we have cancelled this year’s in person race. We’ve been looking forward to the race since the cancellation last year, never thinking this pandemic would last this long.

We understand that this isn’t a replacement for the real thing but running with 7,000 others right now is not possible, but we will try to make it just as fun! This March we will hold the second Virtual Holyoke St Patrick’s Day

Road Race. Create your own 10K route (or use ours!) and compete against other runners. We will provide a familiar looking t-shirt, printable custom bib number, free beer, and local giveaways.

Go to <http://racewire.com/register.php?id=11824> for all the details to register.

Lastly, thank you for your patience and support over the last year. The St. Patrick’s Committee of Holyoke works tirelessly year-round to make this “Homecoming Weekend” the best one of the year. We look forward to the opportunity to host you on the streets of Holyoke for the 45th running of the Holyoke St. Patrick’s Road Race in March 2022.

# Joniec named to Dean’s List at Bryant University

SMITHFIELD, RI – Bryant University is pleased to recognize the students who have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to academic excellence and achievement. Acadia Joniec, class of 2024, from Holyoke, has been named to the Dean’s List for the fall 2020 semester.

“The challenges of the last year have revealed the character and grit of our community of scholars,” said Provost and Chief Academic Officer Glenn Sulmasy, JD, LL.M, reflecting on Bryant’s successful fall semester. “I am impressed and proud of their resilience, dedication, and innovative spirit.”

# Curbside corned beef dinner planned

HOLYOKE – The Ancient Order of Hibernians-James A. Curran Division One and The Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians Division Two of Hampden/Hampshire Counties are sponsoring a “2021 Irish Night in Holyoke-A Go Go”, a curbside pickup of a Traditional Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner and Ribs prepared by the Log Cabin of Holyoke. The event is Saturday, March 6, 2021 at the Log Cabin 500 Easthampton Rd. in Holyoke-pickup is from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on that date. The cultural event will benefit the Maurice A. Donahue Memorial Scholarship

and is in memory of Daniel P. Curran.

The Log Cabin will prepare and feature a traditional corned beef and cabbage dinner and ribs, hash, carrots, potatoes, brown bread, and dessert. The cost is \$25.00 per person and includes the meal and one entry into our 50/50 raffle.

For reservations contact Joe O’Connor at 413-627-7148 or Fran Hennessey at 413-785-5687 by Feb. 27 or online at [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com). The Hibernian website is [aoh-holyoke.com](https://www.aoh-holyoke.com).

# Hampden Charter School earns award

WEST SPRINGFIELD – Hampden Charter School of Science West has earned the College Board AP® Computer Science Female Diversity Award for achieving high female representation in AP Computer Science Principles. Schools honored with the AP Computer Science Female Diversity Award have expanded girls’ access in AP Computer Science courses.

Out of the 20,000 institutions that offer AP courses, 1,119 achieved either 50% or higher female representation in one of the two AP computer science courses or a percentage of the female computer science examinees meeting or exceeding that of the school’s female population during the 2019-2020 school year. That’s nearly 37% more than the 818 schools recognized last year. In 2020, Hampden Charter School of Science West was

one of 831 recognized in the category of AP Computer Science Principles.

According to the data, female students who take AP CSP in high school are more than 5 times as likely to major in computer science in college, compared to similar female students who did not take CSP. The study also finds AP CSP students are nearly twice as likely to enroll in AP CSA, and that for most students, AP CSP serves as a stepping-stone to other advanced AP STEM coursework.

Hampden Charter School of Science West is a tuition free public charter school serving students from Westfield, West Springfield, Agawam and Holyoke. For more information about upcoming events, please visit: <https://west.hampdencharter.org/>

# Local students named to UMass Dean’s List

AMHERST – Below is a list of local students from Holyoke who were named to the dean’s list at the University of Massachusetts Amherst for the fall 2020 semester. In order to qualify, an undergraduate student must receive a 3.5 grade-point average or better on a four-point scale.

Molly Ankiewicz, Andrew Christopher Bermudez, Caroline Margaret Callahan, Daniel J Callahan, Marshall Joseph Crescentini, Seamus A. Dann, Michael Joseph Dunn, Alyssa Garcia, Timothy Colby

Ghiatis, Kathleentran Hoang Giang, Jelitza Gonzalez, Patricia Anne Haradon, Aaron Michael Hohol, Devan Robert Kane, Zachary Keefer, Mary Kate Kraus, Daniel Mainville, Emily YiRun Mainville, Margaret Ann McAndrew, Helena Linda Middleton, Erin Laura Mikalchus, Rija Niazi, Sophia Lina Papulis, Ravi Bimal Patel, Beth Hope Pearlstein, Sadie Eleanor Pecia, Laura Restrepo, Benjamin Richter, Wilona Ryan, Sarah Sirkissoon, Fernando Tenesaca Jr, Alexa Naya Vargas and Ryan Walsh.

# Free COVID-19 testing at HCC extended until March 31

HOLYOKE – Free “Stop the Spread” COVID-19 testing at Holyoke Community College has been extended until March 31, 2021, according to the Holyoke Board of Health.

Drive-through testing at HCC is conducted six days a week in parking lot H near the western entrance to the Donahue Building on the college’s main campus, 303 Homestead Ave.

Drivers are asked to enter the campus from Homestead Avenue, turn left onto the Campus Road and

proceed to parking lot H. There will be signs and parking attendants on site to manage the flow of traffic.

The HCC testing site is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.; and Tuesday and Thursday from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Please Note: Testing may sometimes be cancelled due to inclement weather. Be sure to visit the Holyoke Board of Health website for up-to-date information on cancellations: <https://www.holyoke.org/departments/board-of-health>.



## ◆ La Cucina di Hampden House

1 Allen Street, Hampden, MA

**413-566-8324**

[www.lacucinahampden.com](http://www.lacucinahampden.com)

CURRENT HOURS: Mon-Thurs 3-8pm;

Sat 2-9pm; Sun 2-8pm

Lounge open & pizza available 7 days

## ◆ Route 20 Bar & Grille

2341 Boston Road (The Wilbraham Shops)

Wilbraham, MA

**413-279-2020**

[www.route20barandgrille.com](http://www.route20barandgrille.com)

CURRENT HOURS: Lunch: Thurs-Sat starting at

11:30am; Dinner: Tues-Thurs 4-9pm;

Fri & Sat 4-10pm; Sunday 11:30am-7:00pm;

Sunday Brunch 11:30am-2:30pm

## ◆ Donovan's Irish Pub

Eastfield Mall, 1655 Boston Road, Springfield, MA

**413-543-0791**

[www.donovanspub.com](http://www.donovanspub.com)

CURRENT HOURS: Thurs-Sat 11am-9pm;

Sun 9am-7pm; Sunday breakfast 9am - noon

## ◆ Venice Pizza & Grill

2341 Boston Road, The Wilbraham Shops

Wilbraham, MA

**413-540-8080**

[www.venicepizzagrill.com](http://www.venicepizzagrill.com)

OPEN: Tues-Thurs 10:45am-9:30pm

Fri & Sat 10:45am -10pm; Sun 11am-9pm

Closed Monday

Poetry Corner

Time Beyond Man

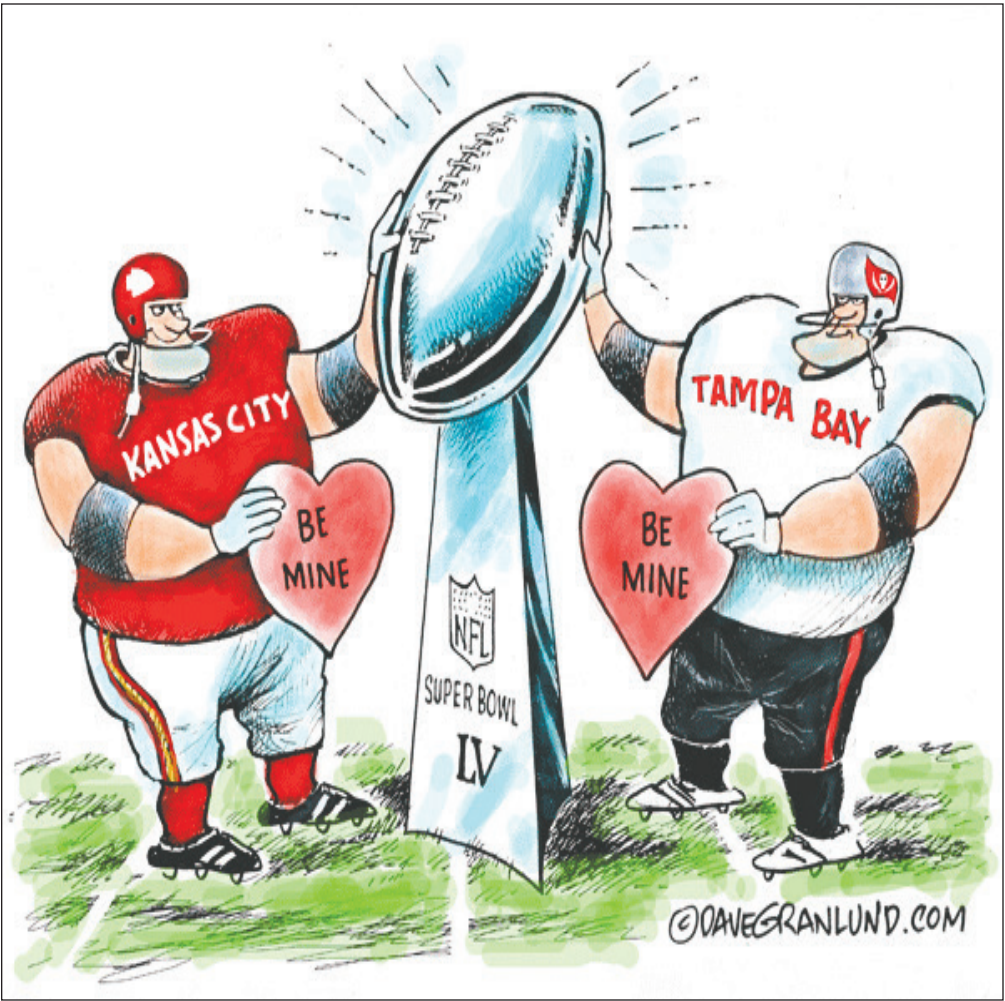
By Thomas J. Kennedy

What really is Time?  
And does it go slow or fast?  
Myself I cannot define,  
As even words don't relate to the thought.  
Everything for sale – even can be bought.

Past happenings people pass by,  
Two steps forward in tech,  
But then again two steps backward.  
And who or what do you value?  
Bring the children to me. . .

Almost one think of day gone  
Staring down. . . Staring down.  
As we lose to isolation  
and true communication  
Past two years filled with  
anger, loneliness and fear  
Building over stress. . . Very little cheer.

Children have been pawns – and will affect  
Them normally, socially,  
emotionally and spiritually  
for years to come.  
Please God, bring back long, slow childhoods,  
Natural non-violent teens,  
no more suicides or screams.

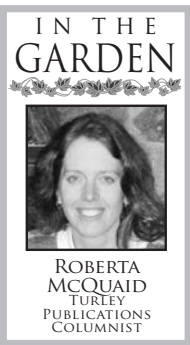


Guest Columns

How to grow nutritious sweet potatoes

The sweet potato is a nutritional powerhouse. According to [www.nutritiondata.com](http://www.nutritiondata.com), it is “low in sodium, and very low in saturated fat and cholesterol. It is also a good source of dietary fiber, vitamin B6 and potassium, and a very good source of vitamin A, vitamin C and manganese.” If these facts aren’t reason enough to try adding this veggie to our garden this growing season, delight in the fact that it is also a very pretty vine.

If my memory is correct, my Mom attempted to grow sweet potatoes one summer when I was child. It wasn’t all that impressive as I recall, at least not as impressive as her peanut growing experiment! Anyhow, the one thing we have against us is that sweet potatoes require a long growing season, somewhere between 90-150 days. The tender shoots are cold sensitive, and must be planted into the ground after all danger of frost has passed. In our area we use Memorial Day as our “frost-free date.” Then, the edible root, aka the sweet potato, must be harvested before the first frost of fall. By



my records, the first frost usually occurs in early October. This equates to 100 days bare minimum of growing time. Still interested, read on.

You can purchase plants through the mail or try sprouting your own from sweet potatoes purchased from the grocery store. Dick Raymond, author of my favorite gardening book of all time, “Garden Way’s Joy of Gardening” (Storey Publishing \$24.95), has

some great tips for doing this: Seven or eight weeks prior to Memorial Day, simply cut the spuds in half length-wise and lay them down in moist peat moss in a shallow tray. Cover with plastic wrap and place in a sunny window until sprouting occurs. Slips should be separated and planted about six inches deep, 12 to 15 inches apart from one another. He advises to water well for the first two weeks; after that sweet potato plants are reportedly somewhat drought tolerant. When fertilizing, choose a formulation that is a bit lower in nitrogen, otherwise you will have lots of vines at the expense of sweet potatoes. Dig up your bounty on a dry day, being

extra careful not to damage the skin. Don’t leave them exposed to the sun for more than an hour and don’t wash them either. Picky, aren’t they? Fresh sweet potatoes aren’t all that sweet, a curing period of two weeks in the dark at 70 to 80 degrees and at high humidity will bring out the great flavor we are accustomed to. Long-term storage should be at temperatures around 60 degrees.

To make sweet potato fries simply cut the root into thick wedges, then toss them with seasoned olive oil (or a favorite salad dressing). Bake on a cookie sheet at 350 degrees for one hour, flipping occasionally. Some ketchup as a dip may help reluctant kids to give the “funny orange French fries” a try.

It’s my hope that you all enjoy growing sweet potatoes from “scratch,” so to speak!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 28 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturalist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to [ekennedy@turley.com](mailto:ekennedy@turley.com) with “Gardening Question” in the subject line.

Questions benefit amount after claim delayed

By Russell Gloor

Dear Rusty: I am having problems getting answers from the national Social Security office or the local agent who I first spoke with to apply for my benefits. I am 70 in January 2021, and applied for benefits at the end of August 2020. I asked to have benefits start in October 2020, with my first payment received in November. I was told that the benefit for applying at age 69 and nine months would not be received until January of 2021. Until then, I would receive the 69 years and 0 months payment, which I received in November and December of 2020. In January 2021 however, I received the same 2020 payment plus the COLA increase. I’ve asked what’s up at the local office and have been waiting for a return phone call. My first question: is the amount I received in November and December last year correct: it is only the age 69 amount, not the 69 and 9 months benefit for the age I was at the time? And second, if that’s true, when in 2021 should I get my full amount? Signed: Confused

SOCIAL SECURITY MATTERS

Dear Confused: I’ll try to clear this up for you. Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs) of 0.667% are earned monthly for each full month you delay claiming after your full retirement age (which for you is 66). But although you earn delayed retirement credits monthly, Social Security only applies them in January of each year. You don’t lose them; they just don’t do the benefit adjustment until January of each year. That’s why you got only the age 69 benefit when you started your benefits in October and why your payment in November and December didn’t include those DRCs.

The Social Security payment you received in January was actually for your December benefits, and included the 2021 COLA increase (which is computed using your December benefit). And just as an FYI, they do apply DRCs immediately for anyone who claims at age 70, regardless of the month they claim. What happened to you was because you claimed before you were 70.

The additional 6% DRCs you earned between January and September last year should be applied in January of this year and

should be included in your next benefit check, which you will receive in February (Social Security pays benefits in the month following when they are earned). When they do that computation, they’ll automatically adjust your COLA using your new benefit amount. So, what you were told by the Social Security agent is essentially correct – your benefit payment won’t reflect those additional DRCs for 2020 until your January 2021 payment, which you will receive in February.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation’s staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. To submit a question, visit our website ([amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory](http://amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory)) or email us at [ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org).

Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor with AMAC.



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A Quote

OF NOTE

“Work isn’t  
work unless  
you would  
rather  
be doing  
something  
else.”

Don Shula

Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the Editor have a maximum of 350 words. We require writers to include their name, address and phone number in order for our office to authenticate authorship prior to publication. Addresses and phone numbers are not published.

Unsigned or anonymous letters will NOT be published.

We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions. Libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks or defamation of character are not allowed.

Deadline for submissions is Wednesday at noon.

Please email (preferred) letters to [thesun@turley.com](mailto:thesun@turley.com). Mailed letters can be sent to The Sun, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

COURSE, from page 1

Classes will be held Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., through May 10. Classes will be held Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., through May 10. Students will meet in the Scibelli Hall (Building 2) theater and must follow the college's COVID-19 protocol. The auditorium seats 200, but the class size will be limited to no more than 20 individuals. Masks are required.

Approved by the Massachusetts Division of Insurance, the training offers an in-depth discussion of insurance regulations, policy arbitration and work completion forms.

The instructor has 20 years' experience in the collision repair and insurance industry in Massachusetts and

Connecticut and holds auto appraiser licenses in both states.

The course will include the use of flat rate manual, collision diagnosis, cost estimation and preparation of written estimates.

To become licensed, students will need to complete the course and a three-month apprenticeship with a licensed Massachusetts automobile appraiser. In addition, they will need to obtain a certified letter verifying the apprenticeship. The apprenticeship must be completed prior to applying to take the Massachusetts Automobile Damage Appraisers License Examination.

For more information and to enroll online, visit [www.stcc.edu/wdc](http://www.stcc.edu/wdc) and then click on "auto damage appraiser." To contact the Workforce Development Center Office, call (413) 755-4225.

HISTORY, from page 1

All events will be held virtually and advanced registration is required through HCC's Black History Month celebration webpage: [hcc.edu/bhm](http://hcc.edu/bhm)

On Wednesday, Feb. 10, at 11 a.m., HCC anthropology professor Vanessa Martinez, Ph.D., will lead "The Legacy of Poor Health: Communities of Color From 1619 to COVID." Martinez will share data on the legacy of American racism and how it amplifies the challenges of living during COVID-19, especially for communities of color. By using a historical anti-racist perspective and health equity lens, she will offer some concrete ways we can improve the lives of our most vulnerable communities.

On Wednesday, Feb. 17, at 11 a.m. HCC will host a watch party and discussion of the film "Fannie Lou Hamer:

Voting Rights Activist" about the outspoken civil rights leader, who was the granddaughter of a slave and the youngest of 20 children. In this rare documentary, Hamer's struggles and triumphs are expressed through her own words as well as those of friends and colleagues. HCC history professor Maura Henry, Ph.D., will lead a discussion following the viewing.

Capping off the month on Tuesday, Feb. 23, at 1 p.m., HCC history professor Gaylord Saulsberry, Ed.D., will lead a discussion about One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression Is Destroying Our Democracy, by Carol Anderson, the award-winning author of White Rage. In One Person, No Vote, Anderson explores the history of voting rights in the United States. The book is part of a Holyoke Community College community read project. Copies are available for free as an ebook through the HCC Library.

SOLDIERS, from page 1

my read of everything, was a complete collapse because it didn't exist. Staff were left on their own to come up with responses."

More than 80 Soldiers' Home staff were sickened during the early stages of the pandemic, treating residents, as the novel coronavirus overran the facility.

Sudders identified that the widespread use of mandatory overtime and unpredictable staffing schedules had long been troublesome. Prior to the pandemic's arrival, Sudders ordered that the home be made the subject of a staffing study.

"I was, frankly, stunned that there had never been a permanent staffing schedule at the home; that's like a basic. Staff should not have to figure out week to week what their schedules are going to be," said Sudders. "There was an overuse of overtime. When I say that, it's either some people using a lot of overtime to fill gaps in staffing structures or positions are not aligned in a way where you have a permanent staffing structure."

Employees would often call out simply because they had failed to receive their schedules in a timely manner and couldn't reschedule personal commitments. Moving forward, time-off requests will be posted in three-month blocks.

The lack of structure led directly to a high turnover rate amongst staff, who did not receive proper training or development. Sudders noted that changes have been implemented over the past 10 months.

"The home did not have a strong internal nursing ongoing development program. That has been one of the reforms that we have in place. If you hire staff, and don't then make sure they have

the skills to do the job, you're going to have high turnover," said Sudders.

While the facility had an adequate number of full-time employees registered at the onset of the pandemic, Sudders noted that they were not properly aligned.

Under new leadership, the home has adopted a permanent clinical staffing structure. To best keep employees accountable, the facility is being held to the gold-star standard set forth by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid.

"I believe that the Holyoke Soldiers' Home should be CMS certified. That's always been my position; that we should lean towards that for many reasons, including the fact that there's really no reason why it should not be," said Sudders.

Sudders does not believe that is appropriate for the Board of Trustees to create policies and procedures. It is her belief that the board should review policies and procedures only after they've been written by management at the home.

The state now requires that the home be inspected annually by the Department of Public Health. Infection control policies and procedures have also been updated.

An October DPH study found that the facility is now clean, staff are knowledgeable and well-trained on the use of PPE and infection control policies and the operation is largely compliant with the CMS survey.

"That is very important because it gives transparency and confidence going forward. I do think those kinds of public inspections are important," said Sudders. "I think that we are on a good path of reform. I think clarifying the government structure for the home is very important."

Dalton Zbierski is a Staff Writer, who can be reached at [dzbierski@turley.com](mailto:dzbierski@turley.com).

SALARIES, from page 1

recent salary increases are excessive, with school employees seeing salary increase of \$5,000 to \$10,000 in one year.

"I looked at the first few," said Murphy. "And I know what the city employees are getting in terms of percentage increases. We need to find a way to say, we want to pay people right, what they deserve, but it has to be rational. It has to be realistic."

One councilor noted Zrike's salary was not on the list, but had to be among the Top 100.

Councilor Joseph McGiverin said the council's Finance Committee would be happy to look into the salaries, but noted there is little that can be done.

"As you know, the council has no vote on these monies," said McGiverin. "The school committee also does not have a vote. The mayor, no one has a

say. It's a state department we lost control of."

He suggested inviting the school committee to participate in a discussion with the finance committee about the salaries.

"I want to get it out there in the public so people know what is going on in our school system," said Councilor Howard Greaney.

Dr. Alberto Vazquez Matos recently took over the Holyoke Public Schools as Receiver/Superintendent. Matos will be participating in the budget process for the first time in a few months. The school budget is about \$107 million for FY2021, a seven percent increase in last year's. The council voted on an appropriation of nearly \$94 million, though some adjustments have been made due to the pandemic.

For anyone wanting to view the list, it can be found at [www.holyoke.org/city-of-holyoke-top-salaries](http://www.holyoke.org/city-of-holyoke-top-salaries).

RESIGN, from page 1

In her letter of resignation, she highlighted some of her accomplishments.

She said she ran the office efficiently and accurately during the past five years she was in the position.

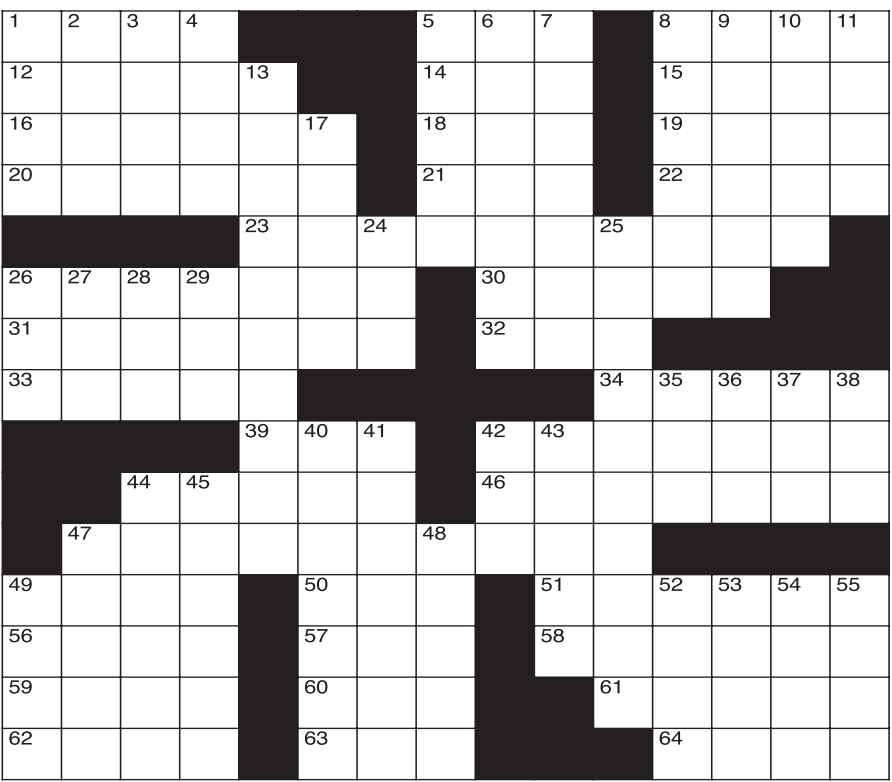
"No functions of my office have suffered or stopped during a global pandemic," she stated in her letter.

There were many issues with discrepancies in some of the record-keep-

ing and audits due to the transitions that have occurred. Smith and her staff worked to show up practices and get cash records caught up. She also said payroll and accounts receivable practices were improved upon.

Morse has called for establishing a finance office position and a centralized finance department since he became mayor.

Smith's resignation is the fifth city official to resign since Morse announced he was not running for re-election this November.



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Nuclear near reach weapon
- 5. Of she
- 8. Hyperbolic function
- 12. Rice dish
- 14. A team's best pitcher
- 15. Strong and healthy
- 16. Induces
- 18. Popular manga series
- 19. From a distance
- 20. Split
- 21. Consumed
- 22. Cushions
- 23. All over
- 26. One who provides food
- 30. St. \_\_ Girl, brand of beer
- 31. Walking slowly
- 32. Wood
- 33. Semitic gods
- 34. Bugle

39. 60-minute periods (abbr.)

- 42. Congressman
- 44. Plant of the heath family
- 46. Subdivision of an army
- 47. Having many different forms
- 49. Shellfish
- 50. Latin for hail
- 51. Between sixth and seventh
- 56. Maori war dance
- 57. Precious or semiprecious stone
- 58. Teeter totter
- 59. Deity
- 60. A major division of geological time
- 61. Fishing net
- 62. Small Caribbean bird
- 63. Field force unit
- 64. Japanese beverage

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Prevents oil spills
- 2. Monetary unit
- 3. The color of the sky
- 4. Dough used to make tortillas
- 5. Popular comic strip character
- 6. Distinct form of a plant
- 7. Replenishment
- 8. Has its own altar
- 9. Expedition to see animals
- 10. Group of related organisms
- 11. His and \_\_
- 13. Frenetically
- 17. Small integer
- 24. Unit of energy
- 25. Studies of culture
- 26. Taxi
- 27. Doctors' group
- 28. Don't know when yet

29. Former measure of length

- 35. Popular CBS series
- 36. Skin condition
- 37. Christian creator and ruler of the universe
- 38. They \_\_
- 40. Caused severe damage
- 41. Work done under harsh conditions for no pay
- 42. One point east of due south
- 43. Sea eagles
- 44. Drenched
- 45. State capital
- 47. Italian city
- 48. Sweetheart (archaic)
- 49. Brief talk
- 52. Popular disco group: Bee \_\_
- 53. First Chinese dynasty
- 54. Military vehicle
- 55. Chinese Moslem

CROSSWORD ANSWER on page 11



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TheSun@turley.com

# Fresh food being distributed

WEST SPRINGFIELD – The Massachusetts Military Support Foundation (MMSF), which distributed Patriot Farm Food Boxes at Eastern States Exposition’s Better Living Center, has handed out its 1 millionth pound of fresh food. This will mark their 1 millionth pound of fresh food distributed in Western Massachusetts since October 2020, when the MMSF stepped up after the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box program’s funding was cut. The USDA’s program has recently been approved for further funding and the MMSF was selected as a distribution partner for the USDA’s Farmers to Families program.

Farmers to Families Food Boxes provide well-balanced, prepackaged perishable food to combat the massive food insecurity problem posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The foods come from farms and producers severely affected by restaurant, school and other closures that interrupted their supply chain. Instead, through federal grants and the efforts of volunteer groups such as the MMSF, the nutritious food is directed to those in need on a local and national scale. Each food package contains 32 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products and meat products. The distribution process follows all COVID-19 health guidelines. Participants have limited interaction as they pick up their food boxes, which are easy to access.

Veterans and the general public are eligible to receive food boxes and pre-registration is required through [www.mmsfi.org](http://www.mmsfi.org). Boxes will be distributed each Saturday 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. until Feb. 27.

Anyone who has preregistered to receive a Farmers to Families Food Box will enter Gate 9 from Memorial Avenue, proceed to Gate 8 and follow directions from event staff to the Better Living Center for check in. The distribution of Farmers to Families food boxes is a drive-thru event; recipients will remain in their vehicles at all times. Note: Pick up location for Feb. 6 boxes will be the Mallary Building.

# Free tax assistance offered

SPRINGFIELD – Springfield Partner for Community Action is gearing up for the annual free Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA). Income eligible taxpayers earning less than \$57,000 annually qualify and should call 413- 263-6500 to schedule an appointment.

VITA volunteers assist low wage earners complete their 2020 federal and state income tax returns in addition to the earned income tax credits, child tax credit and education credits. Further making sure taxpayer claim and receive all state and federal tax benefits, including the Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). EITC is a federal income tax benefit designed to assist working families. It has been called the most significant federal program of lifting Americans out of poverty.

Paul F. Bailey, executive director, said, “although we are closed to the public, the agency continues to assist participants. “This year due to COVID-19 we are implementing a new system using a drop box method. Drop box will allow participants to safely drop-off all required tax documents in advance. Volunteer tax preparers will complete and follow up. Completed taxes will be mailed or we can arrange for pickups”.

Springfield Partners also offer the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC) designed to assist taxpayers having issues before the IRS and/or the State Department of Revenue. If you’ve received a notice from either state of federal tax authority or if you need to file prior year taxes you should call Mary Ellen at 413-263-6500 ext. 6565 or Marty O’Connor at 413-263-6500 ext. 6566.

Springfield Partners is the official anti-poverty agency serving greater Springfield and parts of Western MA. We offer several programs and services including Eviction Clinic, Housing Counseling, Credit Counseling, Financial Literacy, Weatherization, Veterans Services, Emergency Fuel, New Beginnings Early Education & Care, COVID-19 Emergency Response, Scholarships and Telephone Reassurance.

# Clinical & Support Options reminds everyone: ‘It’s OK to ask for help’

NORTHAMPTON – Political unrest, economic challenges, COVID-19 concerns, vaccination questions ... There’s much on the minds of Western Mass. individuals and families these days — and still two full months of winter to get through to boot.

In any given year, winter is a time of increased depression and anxiety. Shorter days and colder temperatures make it hard to get outside for fresh air and sunlight. For many, this sort of “hibernation” can lead to oversleeping (hypersomnia), overeating/weight gain, social withdrawal, and other negative feelings. Add to those winter-pattern symptoms the many additional stressors our community is facing at this time, and it’s easy to understand why some will need to reach out for help.

For that reason, local nonprofit community behavioral health agency Clinical & Support Options (CSO) is conducting an awareness effort to let individuals know that 24-hour care is available for any level of concern.

**Urgent access to services**

Many of us grew up knowing the simplest way to get help: simply dial 911. But much of the time, a 911 call or an emergency room visit to the local hospital doesn’t quite feel like the most comfortable way to address emotional distress — whether it’s for oneself or for a loved one.

That’s why CSO is reminding Western Mass. individuals and families that urgent behavioral health care can be accessed from community locations or even from one’s own home.

“Many individuals may not be aware that they can access help any day, any time without calling 911,” said CSO President and CEO Karin Jeffers. “Emergency Services Programs across

the state, such as those CSO operates in Greenfield and Northampton, provide access 24/7, 365 days of the year at CSO locations or by mobile response.”

In Hampshire County, CSO’s Florence location is available by calling 413-586-5555. In Franklin County, CSO’s Greenfield location can be reached at 413-774-5411. Both crisis locations accept walk-ins and are even equipped with mobile response teams to meet individuals where they are.

In addition, CSO has recently partnered with Cooley Dickenson Hospital to add a community-based location there as well.

**What is a mental health crisis?**

As the short, cold days combine with a stressful pandemic and a highly charged political atmosphere, mental health challenges can take their toll.

According to CSO, it’s important to remember that anyone can qualify for help, and that there is no one answer to the abstract question, “What is a mental health crisis?”

“Mental health is personal and individual,” Jeffers said. “Anyone can seek help regardless of whatever level of crisis they may feel they’re experiencing. There is no ‘qualifying event’ that defines crisis.”

She adds, “We’re available around the clock to help anyone. You can call CSO whether you’re considering self-harm, feeling out of control, experiencing anxiety or depression, or just need to talk.”

To learn more about CSO’s urgent-access and crisis stabilization services in Hampshire County, visit [CSOInc.org/help](http://CSOInc.org/help). To find your nearest CSO location and contact information, visit [CSOInc.org/locations](http://CSOInc.org/locations).

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## MASCAC cancels conference competition

WESTFIELD – The Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference (MASCAC) announced today that the eight MASCAC Presidents made the difficult decision to cancel the fall in spring semester athletic conference competition, including all indoor and outdoor athletic conference competition. The decision ends the possibility of resuming the fall conference competition during the spring of 2021 but will allow fall and winter student-athletes training opportunities. While there will not be a conference schedule for MASCAC fall sports, member institutions will be allowed to schedule fall sport non-conference games at their discretion.

“The MASCAC office has been meeting regularly with the presidents, athletic directors, athletic trainers and other essential staff to consider ways we can bring our student-athletes back to the playing field safely while adhering to all state, federal and NCAA guidelines,” said MASCAC Commissioner Angela Baumann. “Regrettably, the highly contagious nature of the COVID-19 virus and the risk of community spread through conference competition proved too great a risk to our student-athletes to engage in conference play. With the health and well-being of our student-athletes and our staff as our priority, the difficult decision was made to cancel the fall in spring MASCAC competition,” Baumann said.

See RACING, page 8



## Paulo Freire defeats Comp

SPRINGFIELD – Last Friday evening, the Paulo Freire boys basketball team defeated Chicopee Comprehensive 77-36. Paulo Freire, which services the greater Holyoke area, including Holyoke, Chicopee, and South Hadley, was in command the whole game. Will Johnson and Alex Barber led the team with 16 points each.

Above, Emmanuel Cruz goes for the easy layup. Left top photo, Zyir Harris gets ready to shoot near the free throw line. Left bottom photo, Trevor Mims makes his way down the court.

Photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

## Thompson Speedway announces opening racing weekend events

WATERBURY, Conn. – American-Canadian Tour (ACT) and Pro All Stars Series (PASS) officials have announced the slate of racing for the 46th Thompson Icebreaker on Saturday, April 10 and Sunday April 11. The 82nd season opener at Connecticut's Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park currently consists of a nine-division card highlighted by the \$10,000-to-win Icebreaker 125

for the Thompson Outlaw Open Modified Series.

The event marks the return of the historic season kick-off after a one-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Icebreaker was first held in 1974 and has become a staple of the Northeast motorsports calendar. It includes two days of racing with an optional Test N' Tune on Friday, April 9.

All five of Thompson Speedway's local divisions

join the Outlaw Open Modified Series on the card. This includes the Sunoco Modifieds, ACT-type Late Models, Limited Sportsmen/8-cylinder Street Stocks, SK Light Modifieds, and Mini Stocks. Laps for each division are to be determined. The purses for these divisions will be similar to those at the Thompson Speedway events ACT and PASS promoted in 2020.

The PASS Super Late

Models headline the Saturday portion of Icebreaker Weekend with a 75-lap event. It is the fifth straight Icebreaker featuring PASS, joining the 2016-2019 editions. PASS holds their first event of the year in the Northeast after opening the season with a pair of events at North Carolina's Hickory Motor Speedway.

The NEMA Lites of the Northeastern Midget Association, who are longtime

Thompson Speedway supporters, return for another showing at the Icebreaker. The EXIT Realty Pro Truck Challenge rounds out the card. Both series were slated to be part of the 2020 Icebreaker before its cancellation.

Officials are finalizing the full schedule for each day. More information regarding schedules, pricing, and ticketing will be announced over the coming weeks.

“We have something for everyone at the Icebreaker,” PASS president Tom Mayberry said. “It’s important to start the season with a bang, and we’ve put together a line-up to do just that. We know a lot of people are looking forward to the



The Icebreaker 125 will kick off Thompson Speedway's race season.



The event is part of the Outlaw Open Modified Series

Submitted photos

See RACING, page 8

# Indoor football team signs players for upcoming season

WORCESTER – The Massachusetts Pirates have signed offensive lineman Jared Thomas for the 2021 season. Thomas (6’3”, 300 lbs.) last played college football at Northwestern University. He appeared in 51 total games during his four years on the field, including starting all 14 games at center during his junior and senior seasons. Thomas redshirted as a true freshman at Northwestern in 2015. Some of Thomas’ accomplishments at Northwestern include being named

2019 team captain and 2019 All-Big Ten Honorable Mention. The Pirates have also signed offensive lineman Dwayne Wallace. Wallace last played in The Spring League in November 2020. He also played in XFL for the Los Angeles Wildcats in 2020. Wallace has garnered professional football experience outside of the Pirates. After going undrafted in the 2019 NFL Draft, Wallace had brief stops in the NFL with the Pittsburgh Steelers and Chicago Bears. Wallace took part in

rookie minicamps for both teams in May 2019. Prior to his professional football career, Wallace played college football at three different schools. First, he enrolled at Riverside City College for his freshman and sophomore seasons. He then transferred to the University of California at Berkeley for his junior year. In his senior year, he transferred again, this time to the University of Kansas. That season, Wallace started 9

games at right guard. He also started a game at right tackle. Following his college football career, Wallace was a 2019 NFLPA Collegiate Bowl Participant. The Massachusetts Pirates are members of the Indoor Football League (IFL). The Pirates play all home games at the DCU Center located at 50 Foster St. Worcester, MA. 01608. For more information on the Massachusetts Pirates please call (508) 452-MASS (6277), email [contact@masspiratesfootball.com](mailto:contact@masspiratesfootball.com) or visit [www.masspiratesfootball.com](http://www.masspiratesfootball.com).

## Follow Turley Sports on Instagram

HOLYOKE – Turley Publications sports department has recently joined Instagram. You can find our account by searching “turleysports.” We will regularly feature samples of photos that you will see in our publications on a weekly basis. Please follow and share with your friends and loved ones. We will be featuring photos from all 11 of our sports sections in the coming weeks, but as always, you can see all the photos that appear by subscribing to your local paper or picking up a copy in your community.

## New umpires needed for 2021

REGION – The Western Massachusetts Baseball Umpire Association is looking for individuals who are interested in umpiring baseball at the high school and youth level. The WMBUA services high school baseball and various other leagues in the Greater Springfield area/ Hampden County. The WMBUA’s first year members class will be held for roughly five to six weeks, beginning in February. The class dates right now are fluid as the organization monitors what happens with the COVID-19 pandemic. Class is usually one or two nights per week from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The class takes place in the First Baptist Church of East Longmeadow’s

classrooms at 50 Parker Street. Classes may also be virtual if COVID-19 does not allow for in-person meetings. If you are interested in taking the classes, contact Chris Meffen, the WMBUA Secretary, via email at [cmeffen8017@gmail.com](mailto:cmeffen8017@gmail.com) or visit the WMBUA website at <http://wmbua.org>.



## Sign-ups now available for Relics softball

LUDLOW – The Western Mass Relics has opened registration for the 2021 Senior Softball Season. The Silver Division (age 50 to 64) has filled 36 of the 112 spots and the Gold Division (65-and-up) has filled 32 of the 96 spots. The registrations are accepted on a first come first serve basis. All our games are played at the Fish & Game in Ludlow. For further information or to register go to <http://www.western-massrelics.org>.

## Pioneers to host Pelham clinic

LUDLOW – Western United Pioneers FC is excited to offer a soccer clinic in Pelham, MA for players in the Massachusetts North Region. The clinic provides off-season training and skill development by WUP FC coaches. The second sessions available. This program is offered to boys and girls born in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. The four-week program includes one practice per week for a total of \$65 per session. Sessions

will consist of a max of 15 players per field (COVID regulation for the players’ safety). SESSION 2: MONDAYS 2/22, 3/1, 3/8, and 3/15 • Boys and Girls Born 2013 and 2014: Session is at 5 p.m. • Boys and Girls Born 2010, 2011, and 2012: Session is at 6 p.m. The sessions will be held at Pelham Elementary School at 45 Amherst Road, Pelham, MA 01002.

## Hampshire Franklin Baseball Umpire Association conducting classes

REGION – The Hampshire Franklin Baseball Umpire Association (HFBUA) is planning to conduct classes for the 2021 baseball season following all recommended COVID-19 protocols including the possibility of on-line instruction. The association covers umpiring of scholastic baseball for all of Hampshire and Franklin

county schools registered under MIAA and several other baseball leagues in the area. If you are interested in umpiring baseball or obtaining further information regarding the upcoming classes please contact Roger Booth - Secretary/Treasurer of the HFBUA via email at [quilhunter@comcast.net](mailto:quilhunter@comcast.net).

### RACING, from page 7

Outlaw Open Modified Series debut, but there’s plenty of other action planned for fans of both open-wheel and full-fender racing.” Entries are already pouring in for the 125-lap Outlaw Open main event. Two of the biggest names on the list are Franklin, MA’s Bobby Santos III and Milford, CT’s Doug Coby. Santos has posted four career Tour-type Modified victories at Thompson Speedway and six at New Hampshire Motor Speedway. He recently triumphed in the famed Little 500 for Sprint Cars at Indiana’s Anderson Speedway. Coby is a six-time champion of the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour with six victories at Thompson. Other notable Modified stand-outs on the early entry list include former Modified Racing Series and, International Supermodified Association Champion Jon McKennedy, former NASCAR Advance Auto Parts Weekly Series National Champion Keith Rocco, 2011 NASCAR Whelen

Modified Tour Champion Ronnie Silk, and Mike Christopher Jr., the winner of the Budweiser Modified Open at last October’s World Series of Speedway Racing. They’ll be joined by Northeast household names such as Matt Swanson, Eric Goodale, Andy Shaw, Carl Medeiros Jr., and Dan Meservey. A limited amount of garage stalls are still available for Icebreaker weekend. These will be awarded to Outlaw Open Modified Series competitors in the order their entries are received. The Icebreaker 125 is the opener of the new Outlaw Open Modified Series. The six-pack of big-money events concludes with the \$20,000-to-win Thompson 300 on October 9 and 10 as part of the 59th World Series of Speedway Racing. In between are four 75-lap events on Wednesday nights throughout the summer that will pay a minimum of \$5,000-to-win. Rules, entry forms, and other information for the Outlaw Open Modified Series is available at [www.acttour.com/outlaw-open-modifieds](http://www.acttour.com/outlaw-open-modifieds) or [www.racedayct.com/thompson2021](http://www.racedayct.com/thompson2021).

### MASCAC, from page 7

Although fall MASCAC competition has been canceled, the state universities will continue to provide student-athletes with on-campus, in-person practices, conditioning, and training opportunities during the spring semester in order to support their physical and mental well-being. These practice and training opportunities will not use a year of NCAA Eligibility and will be done in compliance with campus, state and federal COVID guidance and protocols. “The MASCAC Presidents know the value of intercollegiate athletics to our campus community and how important sports are to our student-athletes. The news that we need to cancel the fall conference competition is understandably disappointing, but the health and safety of our students and staff is of the utmost importance,” said Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts President James Birge, Chair of the MASCAC Council of Presidents. “These are unprecedented times and

making the difficult decision to cancel fall conference competition is equally unprecedented. We will continue to monitor the facts and re-evaluate the status of athletics as information and data evolves,” said President Birge. The MASCAC Presidents are hopeful that a spring sports season will occur and plan to announce their decision in February. “We are disappointed conference competition couldn’t be provided for our fall student-athletes in the spring,” said MASCAC Commissioner Angela Baumann. “We are still creating plans to play the spring sports season and are hopeful we will be able to provide those student-athletes an athletic experience.” Throughout the 2020-21 academic year, the MASCAC will be celebrating its’ 50th anniversary with special features, facts and trivia commemorating the event. Our conference has a rich history of success on the playing field and in the classroom. Over the academic year, the conference will be highlighting the student-athletes, teams, coaches, and administrators from the last 50 years.



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The show can be accessed at [www.agawamlibrary.org/about-2/friends/#-FriendsPhotoShowFirstVirtual](http://www.agawamlibrary.org/about-2/friends/#-FriendsPhotoShowFirstVirtual). For further information please contact Bob Kadis at [r.kadis@comcast.net](mailto:r.kadis@comcast.net) or at 413-789-4814.



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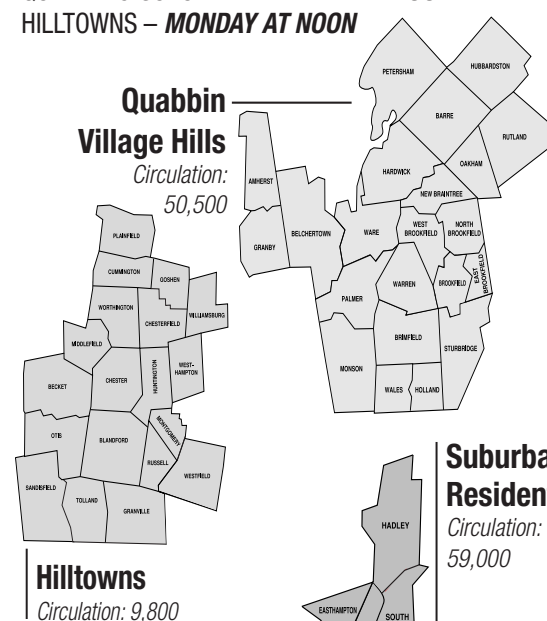
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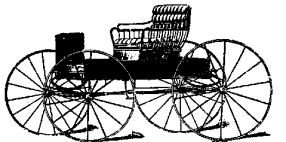
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**Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD21P0086EA Estate of: Elaine Alma Rigali Also known as: Elaine A Rigali, Elaine Rigali Date of Death: 09/07/2020 CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION** To all interested persons: A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Deborah Torretti** of Ludlow, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that: **Deborah Torretti** of Ludlow, MA be appointed as

Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in an **unsupervised** administration. **IMPORTANT NOTICE** You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/24/2021.** This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you. **UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS**

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**Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Hampden Probate and**

**Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 Docket No. HD21P0121PM In the matter of: Jordan J Rapalo Of: Holyoke, MA RESPONDENT (Person to be Protected/ Minor) CITATION GIVING NOTICE OF PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF CONSERVATOR OR OTHER PROTECTIVE ORDER PURSUANT TO G.L. c. 190B, §5-304 & §5-405** To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, a petition has been filed by Briana Torres-Ferrer of Holyoke, MA in the above captioned matter alleging that **Jordan J Rapalo** is in need of a Conservator or other protective order and requesting that Briana Torres-Ferrer of Holyoke, MA (or some other

suitable person) be appointed as Conservator to serve **With Surety** on the bond. The petition asks the court to determine that the Respondent is disabled, that a protective order or appointment of a Conservator is necessary, and that the proposed conservator is appropriate. The petition is on file with this court. **You have the right to object to this proceeding.** If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before **10:00 A.M. on the return date of 03/01/2021.** This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance if you object to the petition. If you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date. **IMPORTANT NOTICE** The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense. **WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.** Date: January 25, 2021 **Rosemary Saccomani** Register of Probate 02/05/2021

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The Sun

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SPRINGFIELD – Springfield Technical Community College student Hannah Lavigne is leading a small class of preschoolers in story time and an activity. She had to plan the lesson and carry it out. She selected the book “Where Do Balloons Go?” by Jamie Lee Curtis, a story about a lost balloon and its many adventures, and came up with a related activity.



Hannah Lavigne

up to make sure the little ones could see the colorful pictures. But the students in this Head Start class were no wiggle worms clustered around this student teacher’s feet. They were each in their own home, watching their teacher and classmates on a computer screen. And from her own West Springfield home, Lavigne conducted the activity she planned, showing them two balloons, one

buoyant with helium, the other gravity-bound. When Lavigne let go of the helium balloon, students squealed when it disappeared from the camera’s eye and their view, drifting upward to her bedroom ceiling. Maybe, like the balloons in the book, this balloon was having a dance party in the sky. They watched as the air-filled balloon dropped to the ground.

Welcome to Head Start at Home

Last fall, Lavigne, like all STCC early childhood practicum students, completed her practicum teaching online.

In March, when the pandemic shut down schools, closed daycare centers and sent legions of college students into intensive online learning, professors in STCC’s early childhood education program didn’t panic; they adapted.

About 55 students are enrolled in STCC’s one-year certificate program or two-year associate degree program in early childhood education, including both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking cohorts.

Students are required to spend 150 hours teaching in the field under the guidance of mentor teachers. Prior to pandemic shut-downs, they logged those hours in a variety of settings: family child care operations, private childcare programs, public school preschool programs and federally funded Head Start centers.

When many centers closed down, STCC students were left without their practicum settings to return to. Luckily, many had already logged time in the field. And then the state reduced the teaching requirements to 75 hours.

“We sort of had to just muddle through and scrape ourselves over the finish line,” said STCC Assistant Professor Aimee Dalenta, who works in the Early Childhood Education program. “But then in the summer we were in a real pickle.”

To meet that need, Dalenta created a six-week long fully virtual pre-school for children ages 3-5 where STCC students took turns planning lessons, teaching them, and serving as assistant teachers.

The virtual preschool was a hit for both the students who gained practicum experience and the participating families whose children had enrichment experiences.

STCC students not only learned about good teaching, they gained first-hand experience in something all teachers understand: the need to adapt to whatever circumstances they face.

“We spent a lot of time talking about the flexibility it requires to teach online,” Dalenta said. “We talked about how marketable it makes them in an

uncertain future. Working with preschoolers online is not an easy thing to do.” For the fall semester, though, Dalenta knew the STCC virtual preschool could not be replicated. While it was a rich and successful summer experience, it was not a sustainable model. It also lacked something important to all teachers in training: the opportunity to work with experienced teachers, who provide grounding for student teachers and model teaching strategies. They needed mentors.

Dalenta reached out to the Holyoke Chicopee Springfield Head Start program, long a placement for STCC practicum students.

Mahera Chiarizo, HCS Head Start’s director of education, was eager to team up with Dalenta to create a good learning experience for STCC students in pandemic conditions.

“This was a first for all of us, doing something remotely,” said Chiarizo. “With the right ideas and motivation, it became a very successful partnership.”

Chiarizo said the ongoing connection between STCC and Head Start has been a fruitful two-way street for many years.

“This is a pipeline for employment,” she said. “We really look at these partnerships as an opportunity to grow the field.”

Relying on the technology platform ClassDojo, which is used by Springfield public schools, STCC students were able to join their mentor teachers for virtual parent meetings, lesson planning, teaching, even taking advantage of professional development opportunities presented to Springfield teachers.

Though classes were taught remotely, the practicum sought to replicate typical student teaching experience in other ways: For example, starting off with a small assignment and gradually building up to increasing amounts of responsibility around both planning and teaching. And just as they do with in-person practicum placements, students are encouraged by their mentor teachers to reflect on what worked well with a given lesson, what they might have done differently and what they learned from the experience.

“It’s the same approach as if they were in the classroom, but it’s virtual,” Chiarizo said.

While teaching preschoolers via computer is not easy, Dalenta believes the principles student teachers need to ground themselves in are enduring, whether in person, on ClassDojo or any other technology platform.

“The fundamentals of good teaching pedagogy,” Dalenta said, “will always be the same until the end of time.”

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